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Unit .36

Session .04

The Redeemer Returns

Scripture

Revelation 19:11-16; 21:1-5; 22:1-5

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse. Its rider is called Faithful and True, and with justice he judges and makes war. **12** His eyes were like a fiery flame, and many crowns were on his head. He had a name written that no one knows except himself. **13** He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God. **14** The armies that were in heaven followed him on white horses, wearing pure white linen. **15** A sharp sword came from his mouth, so that he might strike the nations with it. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will also trample the winepress of the fierce anger of God, the Almighty. **16** And he has a name written on his robe and on his thigh: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. ... **1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. **2** I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. **3** Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. **4** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away. **5** Then the one seated on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new." He also said, "Write, because these words are faithful and true." ... **1** Then he showed me the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb **2** down the middle of the city's main street. The tree of life was on each side of the river, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for healing the nations, **3** and there will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will worship him. **4** They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. **5** Night will be no more; people will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Intro Options

Main Point:
Jesus will return to rid the world of evil and reign forever.

Option 1

Break your students into small groups; they are to imagine they work for a live theater doing an improvisation exercise. Each group should come up with a short story where a problem gets introduced: a miscommunication, a precious item gets stolen, aliens invade the earth, anything. Each skit should be less than sixty seconds long. Have them prepare the skits (option: students could also make a comic strip of their story-problem); then share them.

Next, each group should randomly "hand off" their story to another group; that second group will finish the story of the first group (if you don't want to randomize, you can just assign each group to finish the story of the group that went after them). Their goal is to resolve the problem into a happy ending. Give them a few minutes to make up the rest of the story, then sixty seconds each to finish it. Discuss if it was difficult or easy to make everything end well. Are there some evils or problems that seem impossible to resolve?

In today's session, we'll see that a day is coming a day when Jesus will return, right every wrong, and make all things new. No matter how difficult a problem or evil may seem, Jesus will make it right for His people. Let's see how and why we look forward to such hope.

Option 2

Break students into groups of three; assign each person in each group a number between one and three. Each person should think of his or her best day; it could be a day that actually happened, or it could be something they would like to happen. Give each person about two or three minutes to share his or her best day with the other two. After each person has shared his or her best day, ask each person to explain what makes that day the best: is it who they got to spend it with? What they got to do? What they got to accomplish?

Come back together as a group. Ask students to share what the others in their group said made their best days so great: the ones should share what the twos thought was great; the twos should share what the threes thought was great; the threes should share what the ones thought was great.

Look for commonalities and differences. Some of us love who we get to do things with; others of us enjoy pleasures; others enjoy accomplishing tasks; others enjoy beauty; some enjoy excitement. Though we have different ideas of what the best part of life is, all those ideas will come to fruition on the return of Jesus Messiah: when He returns, every good desire will be satisfied. Today, we'll see how He especially satisfies three desires: for justice, for the renewal of all things, and for communion with Himself.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Revelation 19:11-16.

To this point in the Book of Revelation—and in the New Testament as a whole—the church has been called to patient endurance. We imitate the Lamb, share in His suffering, and carry our crosses. As we learned in the previous session, we conquer as Jesus did—through our selfless obedience and love. But Jesus' second coming will not be like His first. Before, He came to make peace through the blood of His cross (Col. 1:20), but in the future, He will come to make war against a rebellious world.

- **What do these images tell us about Jesus? Does it change the way you think about Him?**

John portrayed the coming Jesus quite vividly—fiery eyes, crowned in majesty, making holy war, executing righteous judgment, and riding in victorious power. At His first coming, Jesus came as a baby, became a servant, and died as a lamb. But in this vision, He comes as a warrior King and triumphs as a Lion. However we may typically think of Jesus, surely it is not majestic enough. May these images help us imagine Jesus as the King that He is, and motivate us to serve Him as such.

- **How might trust in God's future justice help us resist the temptation to take justice into our own hands?**

We are freed from the temptation to take matters into our own hands when we trust in God's justice. Jesus left us an example by trusting God's justice (1 Pet. 2:21-23), and the hope of His return should motivate us to do the same. Our coming King is "called Faithful" (v. 11), and 1 Peter 4 says that we should endure suffering by entrusting ourselves to "to a faithful Creator while doing what is good." We don't have to get even or get revenge because God will make all things right. He will execute judgment, and the eternal scales of justice will be balanced. Think about how much better God will be at avenging injustice than what we might be able to accomplish with our human hands! So, we can heed Paul's words: "Do not repay anyone evil for evil… instead, leave room for God's wrath (Rom. 12:17-19).

1. Kevin DeYoung, "The Never-Failing, Never-Changing, All-Surpassing Goodness of God," T4G 2020
2. Miroslav Volf, Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006) p. 138-139.
3. Derek Rishmawy, "Can a God of Love Have Wrath?," Reformedish, January 22, 2014, https://derekzrishmawy.com/2014/01/22/can-a-god-of-love-have-wrath/.

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 104, DDG)

99. New Heaven and New Earth

When Christ returns and the children of God are revealed, the creation itself will be made new. Like the resurrected bodies that Christians will one day receive, the physical world itself will undergo a similar transformation, so much so that the Scriptures describe it as a new heaven and a new earth (2 Pet. 3:13). Scripture describes the new earth as a city (Rev. 21:10-11,21-26) and as a physical place that will include eating and drinking (Luke 22:18; Rev. 19:9). Best of all, Christ will be all and in all, and we shall see Him face to face.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus will return to rid the world of evil and reign forever.

Revelation 19:11-16

"Divine wrath is not a mark against God's goodness, but an expression of it. God cannot be good and leave injustice unchecked. God would not be good if He were indifferent to the differences between goodness and badness."[1]

"I used to think that wrath was unworthy of God. Isn't God love? Shouldn't divine love be beyond wrath? God is love, and God loves every person and every creature. That's exactly why God is wrathful against some of them. My last resistance to the idea of God's wrath was a casualty of the war in former Yugoslavia, the region from which I come. According to some estimates, 200,000 people were killed and over 3,000,000 were displaced. My villages and cities were destroyed, my people shelled day in and day out, some of them brutalized beyond imagination, and I could not imagine God not being angry. Or think of Rwanda in the last decade of the past century, where 800,000 people were hacked to death in one hundred days! How did God react to the carnage? By doting on the perpetrators in a grandparently fashion? By refusing to condemn the bloodbath but instead affirming the perpetrators basic goodness? Wasn't God fiercely angry with them? Though I used to complain about the indecency of the idea of God's wrath, I came to think that I would have to rebel against a God who wasn't wrathful at the sight of the world's evil. God isn't wrathful in spite of being love. God is wrathful because God is love."[2]

Activity

In today's session, we saw how Jesus will return to judge rebellion, to make all things new, and to be with His people forever. Let's consider how these precious future promises should stir us to the three cardinal virtues in the present: faith, hope, and love.

Break students into small groups; each group will put on a short skit. Randomly assign each group one of the three points from the lesson: that Jesus will judge rebellion, make all things new, or be with His people forever. Their job is to take that specific point and show how it would cultivate one of the three cardinal virtues in our lives today.

See what they come up with and let them share. Discuss how the promise of our Redeemer's return should prompt holiness in our lives this week.

In Defense (p. 106,DDG)

God's wrath is often repulsed in our culture as a reason to reject the God of the Bible. Some find it difficult to believe that God is love when faced with the God of justice in texts like Revelation 19. How could the God of this text be compatible with the God of John 3:16? But could we say that God is love if He is apathetic toward the evils of our world? No; love is animated by truth and justice. As Derek Rishmawy has written, "Wrath isn't the opposite of love, then–indifference is."[3] Love is expressed not only by what it embraces, but also by what it rejects. God's love can be seen, in part, by how He deals with evil and injustice—and that kind of God is the only God worth believing in at all.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Revelation 21:1-5.

In Revelation 19, the King returned to make war on His enemies and vanquish the kingdoms of the earth once and for all. When the King is done with His perfect justice, the fallen and cursed earth will have passed away (v. 1). In its place, a new creation will come down. Christ reigns over this new creation pictured as a new Jerusalem, the capital city of the everlasting Kingdom. She descends as a bride, meaning this new earth is pure and free of every defilement of the former earth. God invites us to look—He is "making everything new" (v. 5).

- **According to verse 3, what is God's purpose for the new creation?**

In the beginning, God walked with humanity in the garden. Soon after, sin would separate us from God; but His redemptive plan has been to reunite us. What the first Adam lost, the second has regained and more! As 1 Thessalonians 4 promises, "And so we will always be with the Lord" (v. 17). Jesus has ransomed a people for His own possession (Rev. 5:9). First Peter 2 says, "Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people" (v. 10). God will dwell with His people again, and He will create a new world to inhabit with us.

- **What is different about this new creation compared to the present world?**

John opened the chapter by saying the former things had passed away, but in verse 4, he explained in greater detail what he meant. Death may be the final enemy to be defeated (1 Cor. 15:26), but rest assured, the curse of death that characterized the former earth will be eliminated. No more cancer, Alzheimer's, dementia, strokes, suicide, or murder. Death will die once and for all. The grief, crying, and pain associated with death and suffering will be no more. As the apostle Paul wrote, "This mortal body must be clothed with immortality. When this corruptible body is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place: Death has been swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:53-54). On that day, the God who has saved us from death and come to dwell with us will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and those who have sown in tears "will reap with shouts of joy" (Ps. 126:5).

Read Revelation 22:1-5.

The closing chapters of the Bible combine a number of prophetic images that depict the restoration of the garden, Tree of Life, Jerusalem, temple, and Davidic Throne. These images are all intermingled because each of these things throughout the redemptive narrative has anticipated this glorious future moment when God and humanity are reunited in an eternal dwelling. God reigns, and where He rules, there is life. His presence brings healing. The curse is undone, and all that remains lives in the light and life of God's presence.

- **How does the promise of this new world motivate faith and endurance in the present world?**

Hebrews 12 says that Jesus was able to endure the suffering and shame of the cross by looking to the joy that would follow (v. 2). The new creation is the joy that is set before us. This is the great prize for which we strive—the blessing of God's presence and reign. When life gets tough and faithfulness gets harder, remember that this life is not the end. The best is yet to come!

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus will return to rid the world of evil and reign forever.

Revelation 21:1-5

"The union of heaven and earth is what the story of the bible is all about…A few times in the New Testament we learn that Christians will be with Jesus in heaven after they die, but that is not the focus of the Bible's story. The focus is on how heaven and earth are being reunited in Jesus and will be completely brought together one day when He returns. So, in the Book of Revelation, we get this beautiful image of the Garden of Eden, now in the form of a city, coming to end the age of sin and death by redeeming all of human history in a renewed creation."[4]

Revelation 22:1-5

"If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next… It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this."[5]

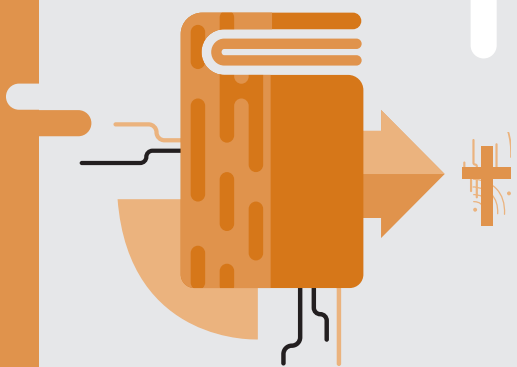
"So you have two persons, God and the Lamb, referred to by the singular pronouns "his" and "him" in verse 3, and verse 4 continues by referring to "his face" and "his name." Each of these singular pronouns refers to God and the Lamb. There are two persons but the pronoun is singular…the New Testament clearly teaches that the Father and Jesus are two persons who share one nature."[6]

We write our names on things that belong to us—our lunch, our homework, our Bibles, etc. Similarly, this imagery is saying that we will live like we belong to Jesus. His name upon our heads is a way of saying that we will bear God's image as we were meant to from the beginning. Truly, we will "we take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). We shall consider the honor and glory of His name in everything we say and do. As James Hamilton wrote, "God's name being on the foreheads of those who inhabit the shining city point to God's character and glory shining out from all they think, say, and do. The every character of God will be evident in the lives of those who live in the holy city Jerusalem…The servants will reign as they worship and reflect God's character."[7]

4. BibleProject, "Heaven & Earth," YouTube video, 6:42, May 19, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zy2AQlK6C5k&t=151s.
5. C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (New York, NY: HarperCollins , 2017).
6. James Hamilton Jr., Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches, p. 405.
7. Ibid., p. 406.

(p. 105, DDG) Christ Connection

This present age will come to an end when Christ returns to fulfill His promises and reign with His people for all eternity. The relationship lost in the Garden when Adam sinned will be gloriously restored when the Garden City is unveiled and Jesus wipes away every tear from every eye. The way to be part of God's new world is to be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, shed for our redemption.



THE REDEEMER RETURNS

Revelation 19:11-16, 21:1-5, 22:1-5

THE REDEEMER RETURNS

Jesus will return to rid the world of evil and reign forever.

JESUS CONNECTION

This present age will come to an end when Christ returns to fulfill His promises. Jesus will erase the effects of sin and make everything new. Only those cleansed in faith by the blood of the Lamb will reign with Jesus forever.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

JOY – Having a cheerful response regardless of my circumstances.

HEAD

When Jesus returns, what will be destroyed?

What will the new Heaven and Harth be like?

HEART

Joy is a response to seeing something turn out the best way possible—a wedding, a new baby, a milestone birthday or a big accomplishment. When you think of John's vision of the new Heaven and new Earth, which parts make you the most joyful?

The Bible promises that, in the end, Jesus reigns. But this is not the end of the story—it's the beginning of eternity with Him. How can knowing the future bring you joy in the present, even when life is difficult?

HANDS

On a piece of paper, write "He makes all things new." Then, make a collage of words or images to show the kinds of things that John describes will be true in the new Heaven and the new Earth. Hang it somewhere to remind you of all the joy and future reward that God promises to His people.